

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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/098 W

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R 141135Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2325

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 0233

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS ET IT

SUBJ: ITALIAN ACTIVITIES IN ETHIOPIA

1. DURING LENGTHY CONVERSATION WITH ITALIAN AMBASSADOR GUIDI
JAN 12, FOLLOWING POINTS OF INTEREST EMERGED:

A. ITALIAN COMMUNITY IN ADDIS, AFTER INITIAL SHOCK,HAS
REACTED CALMLY TO DEATH OF ELDERLY CONTRACTOR DEC 10 AT HANDS
OF EPMG SECURITY FORCES (ADDIS 12371 NOTAL), ALTHOUGH THERE
IS STILL SOME CONCERN THAT BECAUSE ITALIAN HEAVY CONSRUCTION
INDUSTRY IN ADDIS IS GENERALLY PLAGUED WITH LABOR PROBLEMS,
SOMETHING SIMILAR COULD HAPPEN TO OTHERS. EPMG, HOWEVER,
HAS GIVEN ITALIAN AMBASSADOR SOME ASSURANCES THAT IF
COMPARABLE CIRCUMSTANCES BUILD UP AGAIN, THEY WILL MOVE TO
DEFUSE PROBLEM.

B. MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS ASSURED ITALIAN
AMBASSADOR THAT EPMG HAD NO INTENTION OF NATIONALIZING
ITALIAN CONSTRUCTION FIRMS (A MAJOR SECTOR OF THE
ITALIAN PRESENCE IN ADDIS), SINCE ETHIOPIA HAS NO
EXPERTISE IN THIS FIELD. MINISTER THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE
TEN YEARS BEFORE QUALIFIED ETHIOPIANS WERE AVAILABLE
AND EPMG BEGAN TO THINK ABOUT NATIONALIZATION.

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C. LONG-DISCUSSED HIGH- LEVEL ITALIAN DELEGATION
TO ETHIOPIA (ADDIS 11741) IS STILL IN PLANNING PROCESS
ANDODATE HAS BEEN SET. EPMG MOFA CONTACT HAS BEEN
UNAVAILABLE LATELY, BUT IN ANY CASE, TOLD AMBASSADOR
THAT EPMG/WAS HAVING TO DO ITS BRIEFING PAPERS OVER
BECAUSE OF PASSAGE OF TIME. GOI STILL WISHES SEND MISSION
BUT WANTS TO BE SURE THAT ITS OWN POSTURE IS

SUFFICIENTLY POSITIVE TO ENSURE SUCCESS. AMB IS WORRIED THAT MISSION WILL HAVE TO RAISE MATTER OF COMPENSATION FOR NATIONALIZED ITALIAN PROPERTY AND FEARS THAT THIS COULD BECOME CONTENTIOUS ISSUE (ITALIANS APPARENTLY HAVE NOT INFORMED THEIR NATIONALS TO SUBMIT CLAIMS TO COMPENSATION COMMISSION).

D. GOI MOFA HAS BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL THUS FAR IN RECRUITING NEW VICE CONSUL FOR ASMARA. THUS FAR THEY HAVE PROCEEDED ON VOLUNTEER BASIS. AMB BELIEVES IT NOW TIME TO DESIGNATE SOMEBODY.

E. MATTER INVOLVING ERITREA REPORTED ADDIS 11741 HAS APPARENTLY DIED NATURAL DEATH. AMB DID FINALLY PASS WORD BACK, BUT FOUND EPMG SOURCE NO LONGER INTERESTED SINCE "CONDITIONS HAD CHANGED CONSIDERABLY" SINCE ORIGINAL REQUEST MADE. SOURCE TOLD HIM EPMG WOULD CALL IF THERE WAS ANY FURTHER INTEREST.

2. COMMENT: MOTIVATED NO DOUBT AT LEAST IN PART BY CONCERN FOR WELFARE OF HIS SUBSTANTIAL COMMUNITIES IN ADDIS AND ASMARA, AMBASSADOR GUIDI NONETHELESS HAS CONSISTENTLY MANIFESTED A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD DEVELOPMENT OF CLOSER AND MORE HARMONIOUS ITALO-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS, A CONSIDERABLE CHANGE FROM HIS PREDECESSOR. IF RESULTS HAVE THUS FAR BEEN FAIRLY MEAGER, IT IS NOT FOR LACK OF TRYING, AND OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT HE IS MAKING SOME HEADWAY. HE, AT ANY RATE, IS NOT DISCOURAGED.

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